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Soviet Is Said to Build Navy's Second Carrier

By WILLIAM BEECHER

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Feb. 26 — The Soviet Union appears to have started construction of a second aircraft carrier and is reportedly taking additional steps that convince American military analysts it intends to build a fleet of such vessels.

High-ranking military sources have disclosed that the first carrier, expected to be called the Kiev, was recently taken out of drydock at the Black Sea naval shipyard at Nikolayev and that construction had begun there on what is believed to be a sister ship.

Among other indications that the Russians have decided to build a number of the ships that they long derided as vulnerable "floating coffins" are the following:

¶The Soviet Navy has reportedly begun testing a vertical and short takeoff jet aircraft from the 300-foot half-deck of the helicopter carrier Moskva. It is believed that such planes will operate from the deck of the Kiev, said to be almost 600 feet long, and from other ships of her class.

¶For the first time, the Soviet Union has promoted the head of its naval air forces to the rank of marshal of aviation, suggesting a sizable force to be commanded.

¶The commander in chief of the Soviet Navy, Adm. Sergei G. Gershtkov, has written that any country seriously interested in extending its political influence in areas distant from its homeland must have a sea-based tactical air capability.

¶Senior American analysts say the Russians appear to be disappointed in the limited utility of their two helicopter carriers and seem interested in full-size carriers that can accommodate a variety of aircraft and helicopters for a wide range of missions.

More Construction Foreseen

One high-ranking military strategist said: "No one in the West can predict with certainty, but I would expect the Russians to have a force of about three aircraft carriers in five years and about 12 in 10 years. But it will take some time until they have technologically ad-

vanced carriers and aircraft to match our own."

The United States has 14 attack carriers and plans to scale down to a force of about 12 over the next few years.

Military sources say the first true Soviet aircraft carrier, the Kiev, is about 900 feet long, with an angled flight deck of nearly 600 feet. It is in the 45,000-ton class, they say, and appears to have sufficient space to accommodate 30 to 40 jet planes and 30 to 40 large helicopters at one time.

The vessel reportedly does not have steam catapults, as do American carriers, leading to the conclusion that it will operate with short take-off jets, at least initially.

U.S. Uses Catapults

Older American aircraft carriers of this size, in the Hancock class, normally carry 60 to 70 aircraft. To conserve fuel on take-off, the United States employs steam catapults to get jets airborne.

The Russians appear at this stage to be following a different course. For several years they have been developing jet-powered vertical and short take-off aircraft. The first prototype, a Yakovlev jet code-named Freehand by Western analysts, was demonstrated at an air show in the summer of 1967.

Recently, what is believed to be an advanced version of this plane has been test-flown off the deck of the Moskva, in the Black Sea, as well as from a deck-size area at the Ramenskoye airfield southeast of Moscow, military sources say.

They describe the plane as a short, stubby jet with diamond-shaped wings. It is believed to have a maximum speed of about 600 miles an hour and a maximum operating radius of roughly 350 miles.

The range of the aircraft is considerably diminished, analysts say, when it has to use a lot of its fuel to take off straight up, especially against winds streaming across a carrier's deck. If it can use much of the new carrier's 600-foot flight deck for a short take-off, the analysts point out, its range

more nearly approaches the maximum limit.

Military sources say the first carrier was taken out of drydock in December, with completion of the vessel and its armament presumably proceeding offshore. At about the same time, the Soviet Union promoted Col. Gen. Ivan I. Berzov, commander of naval aviation, to the rank of air marshal.

More recently, construction of a second large vessel has reportedly begun in the drydock where the first carrier was built.

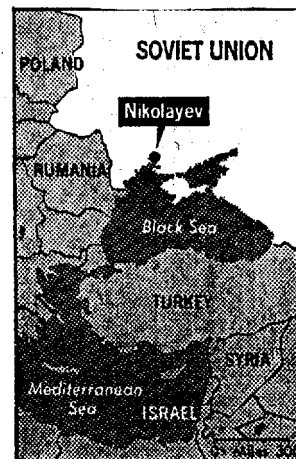
Until recent years the Soviet Union concentrated on a large surface navy to protect its coastal waters and on long-range submarines to pose a threat to cargo vessels and warships of enemies in wartime.

But in recent years it has been building a variety of large, modern surface missile ships and has deployed them in increasing numbers in such distant waters as the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean and even the Caribbean.

Shift in Strategy Seen

In a series of articles in the Soviet naval digest, Admiral Gorshkov has suggested a shift in naval strategy, declaring that while the aircraft carrier would be vulnerable in an all-out nuclear war, it had demonstrable political and military utility in vying for influence in underdeveloped regions.

American planners believe the Soviet Union intends to assign the numbers and types of air-



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Nikolayev, where ship is under construction.

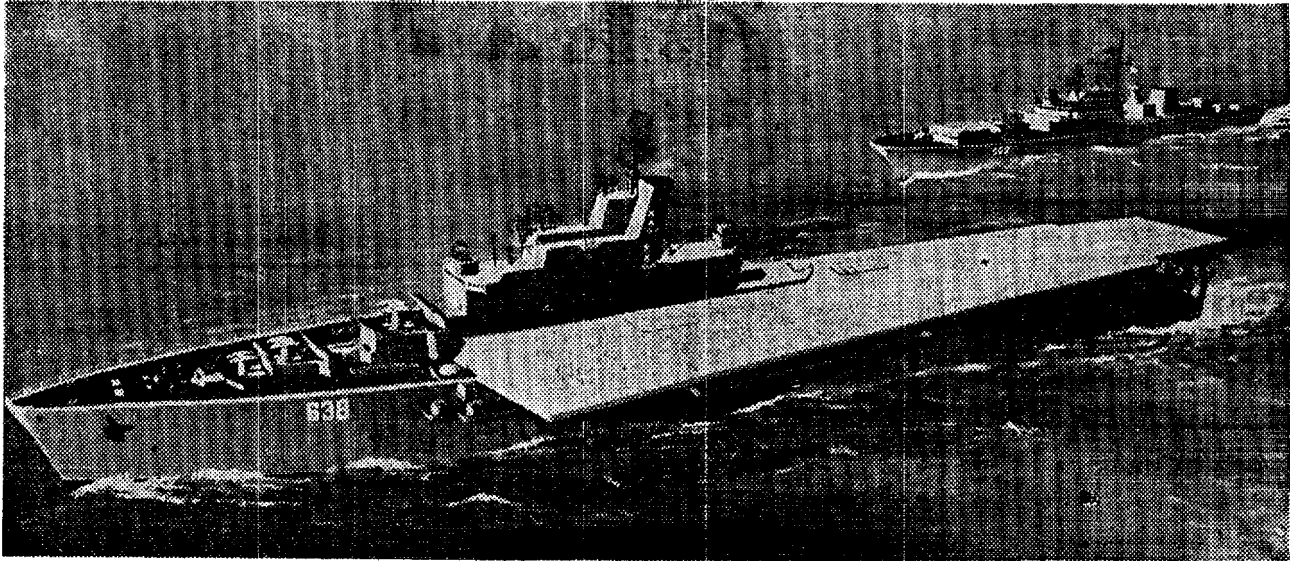
craft on carriers according to the situation. They say that in situations where the primary concern is the threat posed by an enemy's submarines, the carrier could carry mostly large helicopters to search for undersea craft far from the fleet and destroy them in time of war. Both the Moskva and another carrier, the Leningrad, with room for 20 to 30 helicopters, can do this now.

But, the American planners say, should the Soviet Union prefer to pose a threat to put troops ashore in helicopters and support them with jets, then the larger carriers could carry a lot more jets and troop-carrying helicopters.

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U.S. Navy

An artist's rendering of the way an aircraft carrier partly completed by the Soviet Union, and another believed to be under construction, are to look. At right rear, a guided-missile destroyer is depicted.